

- Sonoma Valley Sun - <http://news.sonomaportal.com> -

Nonprofit profile: Chicuchas Wasi

Posted By [Sun News](#) On April 10, 2013 @ 11:55 am In [News](#) | [Comments Disabled](#)

The Sonoma Valley is home to dozens of nonprofit and charitable organizations doing great work on a number of fronts. Here, in the first of new series that will appear periodically in The Sun, is a look at one of the area's lesser-known nonprofits.

Name of Organization: Chicuchas Wasi

Founder and president: Diana Rae Lewis, Founder and President



[1] **Mission:** Chicuchas Wasi Alternative School for Girls promotes gender equality, personal self-esteem, and human dignity for the ignored, indigenous female in rural Andean society in Cusco, Peru, with academic education and by preparing and empowering girls for a womanhood of economic survival, leadership, dignity, equality and opportunity. Our parent classes teach the value of female education and leadership preparation, the value of family support, and conflict resolution to stop violence against women and girls.

Why it matters: A staggering number of the girls and their families live in stark poverty, lacking basic services and adequate food. Peruvian law states grade school is free, but in reality many poor families living on \$1 USD a day or less, cannot pay for notebooks, uniforms, bus fares, and supplies required to attend school, and so it is not really free. Girls

are destined to a life of domestic servitude and oppression without an education. The handed-down belief of rural uneducated women reinforces their belief that they are inferior to men and destined to suffer from human rights violations of hunger, poverty, rape, beatings, and inability to care for their children. At CW school we are committed to awakening in our students their personal self-worth, and self-confidence, and together with basic education we prepare young females for a quality life of opportunity, and economic survival.

How it started: In 1986, while I was living in Cusco, I came to know the 6-11 year-old street children abandoned by helpless mothers. One day a haggard 30-ish woman came up to me on the street and stretched out her arms revealing a tiny swaddled baby she wanted to give me. My heart broke with my understanding of her intent. I am the mother of four, and I know that only an absolutely desperate mother would do this. I founded CW in 1987, originally as an emergency shelter for street kids, providing a refuge for boys and girls who suffered human rights violations of abandonment, homelessness, sexual and physical abuse, hunger, poor health and other problems.. CW provided shelter, food, health care, hygiene education, and vocational school that served hundreds. In 1989 Ruth Uribe, a professional teacher, born, raised and educated in Cusco, Peru, joined our CW resident staff. Together, we laid the foundation for the CW Alternative School for Girls. In the beginning it was difficult to convince mothers of the value of educating a girl, even as they were struggling to find a way to financially provide for their children. Through Ruth's tireless energy and dedication, we opened our first class of 15 kindergarten girls in 1997. The local community would ask, "why bother?" saying with a laugh it would be a waste of time to try to

educate these girls. This attitude only powered us forward; as women ourselves, we knew otherwise. Today, after almost 16 years dedicated to educating these forgotten girls, we are changing those attitudes in the families and the community.

Proudest accomplishment: Ruth and I have had a longstanding dream that CW would have one day it's own primary school for girls for years to come. An anonymous donor, after experiencing the CW method to educate and empower girls, built a large Primary School for our students in rural Cusco in 2012. The school has eight classrooms, kitchen, dining room and multipurpose room. The 2013 school year has 115 students. To reinforce the values taught in school, classrooms were named: Love, Truth, Solidarity, Honesty, Responsibility and Respect.

Greatest Need: The most pressing need today is to fund the CW School Budget of \$131,000 for 2013. We have a balance of \$55,000 yet to fund. CW receives no Peru government assistance. We have salaries for eight teachers, one bus driver, two cooks, director, and secretary.

[2] **What's Next?** We are awakening in CW girls their personal self worth, self-esteem, and self-confidence, and demonstrating this also to their families and society. Through education we will prepare young females for adult leadership roles to challenge the pervasive discrimination toward girls, women and indigenous people in general, and for societal change. We work also with the mothers of our students in classes and workshops to raise their self-esteem and self-confidence and teach them that they have human rights. We stress that educating their daughters will give them the opportunity for a future out of poverty and dependency, and positive choices.



Where to learn more and contribute: 707-939-7162. Chicuchaswasi.org.

Send your nonprofit news to: News@sonomasun.com [3]

Article printed from Sonoma Valley Sun: <http://news.sonomaportal.com>

URL to article: <http://news.sonomaportal.com/2013/04/10/nonprofit-profile-chicuchas-wasi/>

URLs in this post:

[1] Image: http://news.sonomaportal.com/2013/04/10/nonprofit-profile-chicuchas-wasi/63214_486165178100699_285776467_n/

[2] Image: http://news.sonomaportal.com/2013/04/10/nonprofit-profile-chicuchas-wasi/ph_grid7_13129_44633-3/

[3] News@sonomasun.com : <http://news@sonomasun.com>

Copyright © 2010 Sonoma Valley Sun. All rights reserved.